

# Strengthening Research Ethics for Qualitative Enhancement of Higher Education



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# Introduction:

Some researchers with ill-intentions often break the research ethics to complete the project in a hurry for materialistic gain. Sometimes the researchers do the same due to lack of awareness. They are consciously or unconsciously harming the humanity and making hindrance for welfare of the society in general. Thorough research in various strata of higher education helps in qualitative enhancement of nation's education system which leads to speedy advancement of the citizens of the country. So ethical corruption in the field of research should be stopped through different ethical rules and guidelines made by higher authorities and rigorous legal action should be taken if it is necessary. To protect human subjects of research every possible and honest measures should be followed by the researchers.

# What is Research Ethics (R.E.)?

- ❖ The Research Ethics is closely related with Moral Values and Moral Principles. It is concerned with Rights, Dignity and Safety of Researchers. It Teaches the Society what is Wrong and what is Right?
- ❖ Research Ethics refers to a complex set of values, standards and institutional schemes that help constitute and regulate scientific activity. [Collected From: <http://www.etikkom.no/English/NESH/guidelines>]
- ❖ Research Ethics concerns the Responsibility of Researchers to be Honest and Respectful to all Stakeholder (Individual/s, Communities, Groups, Institution, State etc.) who are affected by their Research Studies or their Reports of the Studies' Results.

# Research Ethics Continue...



According to Catherine Dawson (2002), “Many people are willing to disclose a lot of personal information during research so it is needed to maintain the secrecy of identity of respondent and to make sure that we treat both the participants and the information they provide with honesty and respect. This is called research ethics.”

Therefore **R.E. means:** A set of *norms for conduct that distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in research;*

# Importance of Ethical Guidelines

Research always tries to find out new things or to re-interpret an old ones through a systematic and scientific manner. Harm to humanity has become an important question in the physical and natural sciences which may not hold the same importance for social or behavioral sciences. In these disciplines, many questions have been raised as how to treat human subjects in their researches. In the other side, some research is conducted on animals.



In this context, Ethical Guidelines play a significant role in research process to protect any type of subjects.

Ethical Guidelines for Research do not serve the same function as laws. It is a tool for researchers themselves. They identify various relevant factors that researchers should not take into account previously. The Guidelines for Research Ethics help the researchers and also research community to promote the ethical views, attitudes and judgement, to raise their awareness of conflicting standards. Various ethical standards embodied in the Guidelines for strengthening the research ethics.



# Basic Ethical Guidelines for Considerations in Research



The UGC has been already taken several initiatives to implement the standard and quality of research in higher education. There are number of reasons why it is important to follow to ethical guideline in research, especially in social sciences research. The ethical guidelines promote the aims of research and avoidance of huge error. The following basic ethical guidelines that deal with the areas of concern are:

Involvement of Subjects, Informed Consent, Privacy and Confidentiality, Protection from Stress, Exploitations of Subjects / Others, Maintaining Self-Respect, Maintaining Code of Ethics, Plagiarism, Fabrication and Falsification of Data, Non-publication of Data, Faulty Data Gathering, Obfuscation etc.

# Basic Ethical Guidelines...



## A. Subjects Related Ethical Guidelines

### i. Involvement of Subjects:

There are two types of harm to subjects which are of concern are the possibility of physical harm and psychological harm. Possibility of psychological harm to subjects in social sciences is more. Research in these disciplines might have potential for psychological harm to subjects.

### ii. Informed Consent:

Subjects are made fully aware of the nature and purpose of the research. Sometimes age, illness, legal capacities of the subjects are incompetent to give informed consent. Then the informed consent of the parents or responsible representative must be secured. Freedom to participate or decline to participate is fundamental right of the subjects.

### **iii. Privacy and Confidentiality:**

Privacy refers to capacity of subjects to control when and what conditions others have access to their behaviours, beliefs, and values. Confidentiality refers to linking information to a person's identity. Researchers should hold all information that he / she may gather information about subjects in strict confidence. Any information should be disclosed without the permission of the subject.

### **iv. Protection from Stress:**

Research in social and behavioural sciences might have potential for any type of physical and mental stress to subjects.

### **v. Exploitations of Subjects / Others:**

Researchers have obligations to their subjects, co-investigators, assistants, colleagues and technical personnel, involved in the research project. They give appropriate credit and respect for their contribution in the research work.



## **B. Researchers Related Ethical Guidelines**

### **vi. Maintaining Self-Respect:**

Researchers must allow the subjects to maintain their self-respect. In many times, researchers forget about maintaining the dignity of the subject.

### **vii. Maintaining Code of Ethics:**

There are exists some code of ethics while researchers are going to study the subjects for their own investigation. The institution or organisation under study must have some code of their own and the researchers must conform to it.

## **C: Research Content Related Ethical Guidelines**

### **viii. Plagiarism:**

It means using ideas, writings, or drawings of others as your own. In research, especially in social and behavioural sciences, ideas or data from other's work are borrowed without acknowledging the original investigators. Another type of plagiarism is self-plagiarism when reuse of one's own research. Both type of plagiarism is considered to be unacceptable practice in the research.

### **ix. Fabrication and Falsification of Data:**

The fabrication is making up data and recording or reporting them without visiting to the field area. In survey research, field workers present data without surveying or interviewing the actual subjects. The falsification is manipulation research materials equipment or processes or changing data such that the research is not accurately represented in research. Such type of practices should be prohibited.

## C: Research Content Related Ethical Guidelines ...

### **x. Non-publication of Data:**

Non-publication of data refers to 'not including' data because they don't support the hypothesis. It is also called "cooking data".

### **xi. Faulty Data Gathering:**

This refers to 'wrong procedure of data collection'. Such as, Subject comes in with a hangover and collect data from him anyway, Inappropriate treatment of subjects, writing data incorrectly etc.

### **xii. Obfuscation:**

The obscuring research finding by the reporting style by the investigators, if the researcher is not highlighting the results that are important or those that he does not fitting with his ideology. The obfuscation also includes the display of data graph. The graph must be given appropriate titles, labelled axis and any transformation used such as classification the axis must be clear to the reader.

# Conclusion:



To protect the basic ethical guidelines of research every possible steps should be maintained by the stakeholders. For this reason, MHRD, UGC, Different Educational Bodies under Central and State Governments and Research Wings of different Universities should be always cautious about the violation of the ethical norms, guidelines and take proper action for strengthening research ethics for the sake of qualitative enhancement of higher education and as well as upliftment of educational scenario of the country. Simultaneously, there is a great need to educate the researchers about the research practice and basic ethical guidelines.

# Thanks All of You



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